

midday brightness." A babe lay in a manger—the only cradle for the Son of God!

In heaven a choir of angels began the anthem of peace, then a sweet, seraphic strain ran through all the legions and tuned all their harps. The good tidings were more than heaven could hold, and through the portals of the sky flowed the rapturous chorus,—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Do you wonder that *Mary* is a name common to all Christian nations? There are Marys in palaces and in cabins, pronounced differently in the German, French, Italian, Spanish and English, yet all namesakes of that Mary who kissed the soft cheek of the Christ in the night of the nativity. In giving his only Son to the world, God honored science. Geology shall forever bow before the Rock of Ages. Botany shall forever worship the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. Astronomy shall forever hold in sacred adoration the Star of Bethlehem.

“Joy to the world,
The Lord has come;
Let earth receive her king.”

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE.

G. A. RUFF.

One of the most important events recorded in the Acts of the Apostles is that of the conversion to Christianity of the eunuch by the preaching of Philip. While Philip was at Samaria, the angel of the Lord spake unto him saying, “Arise, and go towards the South, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza. And he arose and went; and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scriptures which he read was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb, dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth; in his humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some

other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.” Acts 8: 26-39.

Now, the particular thing to be noticed here is this: The eunuch was, indeed, reading from the inspired Word of God, but the entrance of the words he read gave him no light, because he did not understand them. But to the mind of Philip, these same words were full of light, and each one was of weighty significance. He knew that in Jesus Christ all things written in Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, had been gloriously fulfilled. Hence, when Philip expounded the Scripture which the eunuch read in doubting, but teachable state of mind and thereby preached unto him Jesus as the Son of God, the words of the inspired prophet, which before were so dark and incomprehensible, also entered the eunuch's mind with light. He saw their meaning, believed on the Lord, was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing in the new Christian light and faith which came to him in so unexpected and providential a manner. We see, therefore, from this example that the Bible cannot be understood without the help of doctrine to guide the mind. Doctrine teaches how the Scriptures are to be understood. The Catholics, Protestants and Jews understand and interpret the Bible according to their doctrines, dogmas or creeds. If the doctrine that is in the mind when men read the Bible is true doctrine, then the Bible will appear full of spiritual light and instruction. But if the mind is already preoccupied with a false dogma, then the spiritual truths of the Word of God will be falsified and perverted. It is not proper to say, therefore, as many do say, “We have the Bible, and can read it for ourselves, and that is enough.” But having the Bible, believing it to be a revelation from God, and reading it in serious, devout and teachable state of heart and mind, we need to rightly understand what we read, or our reading will be but a form or ceremony, having no life in it. It may be said that doctrine teaches how the

Word of God is to be understood, in the same way that science teaches how the works of God are to be understood. The one doctrine, or first principle of true Christian faith, which opens up Scriptures is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and one with the Father. The whole force and purpose of the Gospel is to teach us that in Jesus Christ, God, the Creator and Preserver of the universe, has revealed and manifested himself as the Redeemer and Saviour of men. Hence, we read in Revelations, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Any doctrine, dogma or creed that leads the mind away from Jesus Christ as the Incarnate God of heaven and earth, is and must be false, and ought to be instantly rejected as such. We receive all true ideas about God, his infinite and eternal love, wisdom, and power, as well as of his glorious personality, from Jesus Christ, and the moment we look to any other than him to guide and teach us, that moment we fall into darkness. The apostles, therefore, exhort us to look to Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith, as the true God, and eternal life. Having the mind and faith firmly fixed on Jesus Christ, the next thing to know and believe is, that in order to be saved, *we must* repent of our evils as sins against God, and live a life of *charity* towards our neighbor. For the Lord Jesus said, “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the *law and the prophets*.” “Also, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Again, “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me.” Let us be careful, it is a stubborn truth that we love self far more than we do our neighbor, let us be awake, and obey these sacred things of the Master or we will surely come short of reaching that glorious habitation prepared for God's elect. Finally, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”

True christian doctrine, then, involves but two points, faith in Jesus Christ, and charity or love to our neighbor, which is exercised when we do to the neighbor as we would that he should do unto us in every transaction in life.

Read the Bible with these principles in mind and see if it does not become a new and different book to you. What men teach, what human creeds declare, what dogmas the churches formulate, are of little importance.

Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master, and good will to man is the Christian life.
North Georgetown, O.

Selfishness is as hard to cure as a cancer.